

our communities, and defend our homeland. Through their public service, they have strengthened our democracy, and their dedication to faith and family has enriched our Nation's character.

Laura joins me in sending our best wishes for a happy St. Patrick's Day.

**George W. Bush**

**Remarks at a Saint Patrick's Day Shamrock Presentation Ceremony With Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland**

*March 17, 2004*

*Taoiseach*, thank you very much. Thanks for the lovely gift of shamrocks. It is a beautiful symbol of a beautiful land. Laura and I welcome you back to the White House. We're honored to have you join us to celebrate Saint Patrick's Day.

This day is always a happy one for Americans. In some places, Americans get a little too happy. [*Laughter*] Today we reaffirm the bonds of friendship between our countries. We remember a courageous man who preached a gospel of peace. We celebrate a heritage that is claimed by millions of my countrymen. There's an Irish saying that there is luck in sharing. For more than two centuries, your country and mine have shared responsibilities. We've shared aspirations, and we have shared values.

From my Nation's earliest days, Americans of Irish descent have helped to establish and define America's most cherished principles. They've helped to defend the liberty of their adopted homeland. Today, the people of the United States and the people of Ireland continue to share so much. Our economies are more closely linked than ever. Together, we are fighting terrorism, a danger that has brought destruction and grief to Americans and Irish alike and to the world.

I join the *Taoiseach* in sending condolences to the people of Spain as they remembered their murdered countrymen. I thank you for your strong support in our common struggle.

Our nations are also standing for peace and justice in places like the Balkans and Afghanistan and beyond. We share a common vision for Northern Ireland. We seek a lasting peace for the people of Northern Ireland, a peace that will allow people to live free of terror and intimidation.

We seek a region that is stable and prosperous and tolerant and locally governed. I commend Prime Minister Ahern and Prime Minister Blair and all of those who are working so hard to implement the Good Friday Agreement. I call for a permanent end to all political violence. There's no place for paramilitaries in a democratic society. The partnership of America and Ireland is close. It is lasting, and it is important to the peace of the world.

I look forward to this summer to visiting Ireland for the EU and U.S. Summit, to strengthen the essential partnership between the United States and Europe. *Taoiseach*, may the friendship between your people and mine prove as strong in the years to come as it has in the centuries past.

May all the people of our nations have a happy Saint Patrick's Day. We ask God's blessings on the people of Ireland, and may God continue to bless the United States. Welcome.<sup>157</sup>NOTE: The President spoke at 10:25 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom. The transcript released by the Office of the Press Secretary also included the remarks of Prime Minister Ahern.

**Letter to Congressional Leaders Transmitting a Report on Assistance Provided to Azerbaijan**

*March 17, 2004*

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

On December 30, 2003, I exercised my authority to extend the waiver of section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act, concerning assistance to Azerbaijan. Consistent with paragraph (g)(6) of the heading "Assistance for the Independent States of the Former Soviet Union" in title II of the Kenneth M.

Ludden Foreign Operations, Export Financing, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, Fiscal Year 2002 (Public Law 107–115), I am providing the attached report prepared by my Administration concerning assistance provided pursuant to this waiver. The report describes the status of:

- All training and assistance provided to the Government of Azerbaijan pursuant to the extension of the waiver of section 907 of the FREEDOM Support Act;
- The military balance between Azerbaijan and Armenia and the impact of U.S. assistance on that balance; and
- Negotiations for a settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and the impact of U.S. assistance on those negotiations.

My Administration remains fully committed to continue working with the Congress and all concerned parties to bolster peace, prosperity, and freedom in the South Caucasus.

Sincerely,

**George W. Bush**

NOTE: Identical letters were sent to Ted Stevens, chairman, and Robert C. Byrd, ranking member, Senate Committee on Appropriations, and C.W. Bill Young, chairman, and David R. Obey, ranking member, House Committee on Appropriations. This letter was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 18.

### **Remarks to Military Personnel at Fort Campbell, Kentucky**

*March 18, 2004*

I'm glad to be back. Thanks for having me. Thanks for inviting Laura. I am proud to be here once again with the Screaming Eagles of the 101st, with the Green Berets of the 5th Special Forces Group, and with the Night Stalkers. Many of you have seen action in the global war on terror. Some of you have just returned to Fort Campbell from your deployments. Thank you for a job well done. Welcome home.

Laura and I are honored to be with all the personnel at Fort Campbell and with all the family members who live here. Each one of you serves our Nation by giving your love and support to our soldiers. Here at one of

America's vital military bases, you've built a strong community of people who care about each other and share the challenges and rewards of army life. America is grateful. America is proud of our military families.

All who serve at Fort Campbell and all who wear the uniform of the United States are serving at a crucial hour in the history of freedom. In the first war of the 21st century, you're defending your fellow citizens against ruthless enemies, and by your sacrifice, you're making our country more secure. You have delivered justice to many terrorists, and you're keeping the rest of them on the run. You've helped to remove two of the most violent regimes on Earth. With daring and skill and honor, you've held true to the Special Forces motto, "To liberate the oppressed."

America is indebted to you. And we're also indebted to the men and women of the National Guard and the Reserves who are serving abroad and those called up for homeland security assignments. Hundreds of Guard and Reserve units across America have been activated in this time of war. These fine citizens and their families and their employers have put duty first, and our Nation is grateful to them as well.

We've got a lot of veterans with us today, veterans who have served our Armed Forces worldwide and who now live near Fort Campbell. Thank you for the great example you've set for today's soldiers. Thank you for your service to our Nation.

I want to thank General Petraeus for being such a strong leader and a good man. I want to thank General Ellis for being with us today—oh, I forgot. I want to thank Holly Petraeus as well. She has done a—she deeply cares about the men and women from this base. It's clear when you talk to her, she's got a lot of love in her heart.

General Ellis is with us, Commanding General of the U.S. Armed Forces Command. General Ellis, thank you for being here. Today I traveled down from Washington with two Members of the United States Congress who care a lot about the people stationed at Fort Campbell and who live around the Fort Campbell area. That would